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SUBJECT: MEXICO RECASTING PLAN PUEBLA

¶1. Bosco Marti Acencio, the Foreign Ministry's point person on Plan Puebla, discussed with poloff December 6 GOM efforts to reinvigorate this initiative created originally with a view to fostering greater cooperation and integration among Mexico and its Central American Neighbors. At the outset of Plan Puebla, members had discussed cooperation on infrastructure projects relating to roads, phones, electricity and a cross border pipeline. Marti conceded the plan had produced underwhelming results as States had enough trouble developing their own national proposals on these ambitious endeavors much less finding a way to integrate these efforts effectively with their neighbors.

¶2. Marti signaled a desire for the group to focus on more pragmatic areas for cooperation including inter alia epidemic illnesses (dengue, malaria), natural disasters, climate change, etc. Coordination on infrastructure projects would continue but in the meantime the group would try to establish a track record of success on less complicated matters. This was important not only politically but also financially. Approximately 80 percent of Plan Puebla's funding comes in the form of loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). According to Marti, the IDB is predisposed to support lower cost, more focused projects.

¶3. Marti advised that Colombia, Ecuador and Peru seek to join the initiative. He indicated their participation created an opportunity to change the name of this cooperative arrangement and hopefully allow the group to establish a more dynamic reputation with a new name. The June 2008 meeting of the group's Presidents should provide the best opportunity to invite new members to participate and anoint the group with its new name.

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